

**Amendments to the Claims:**

Please cancel claims 1-11.

12. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition for preventing and/or treating diseases associated with or caused by an altered metabolism of bile acids, comprising an effective amount capable of producing a normalizing effect on such an altered metabolism in a patient suffering therefrom, of (1) at least one bacteria strain provided with: (a) a 7  $\alpha$ -dehydroxylase activity of less than 50%, and (b) a bile acid deconjugation activity of less than 50%, and descendants, mutants and derivatives thereof preserving activities (a) and (b), and (2) a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

13.(Original) The pharmaceutical composition of claim 12, wherein said at least one bacteria strain is a gram-positive bacteria strain.

14.(Original) The composition of Claim 12, wherein said at least one bacteria strain belongs to a species selected from the group consisting of *Streptococcus thermophilus* ,*Streptococcus faecium*, and *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*.

15.(Original) The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 52 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1670.

16.(Original) The composition of claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 46 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1668.

17.(Original) The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus*

*thermophilus* YS 48 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1669.

18.(Original) The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus faecium* SF 3 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1671.

19.(Original) The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus LB 1* deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1664.

20.(Original) The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus LB 3* deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1665.

21.(Original) The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus LB 7* deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1666.

22.(Original) The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus LB 77* deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1667.

23:(Original) The composition of Claim 12, comprising  $10^3$  to  $10^{13}$  cells of the bacteria strain per gram of composition.

24.(Original) The composition of Claim 12, further comprising lactulose.

25.(Original) The composition of Claim 12, further comprising bile acid-based preparations, such as ursodeoxycholic acid and tauroursodeoxycholic acid.

26.(Original) A method for preventing and treating diseases caused by or associated with an altered metabolism of bile acids, said method comprising administering at least one bacteria strain characterized by exhibiting:

- (a) a 7  $\alpha$ -dehydroxylase activity of less than 50%, and
- (b) a bile acid deconjugation activity of less than 50%, and descendants, or a mutant or derivative thereof preserving activities (a) and (b).

27.(Original) method of claim 26, wherein the at least one bacteria strain is a gram-positive bacteria strain.

28.(Original) The method of Claim 26, wherein the bacteria strain belongs to a species selected from the group consisting of *Streptococcus thermophilus*, *Streptococcus faecium*, and *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*.

29.(Original) The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 52 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1670.

30.(Original) The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 46 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1668.

31.(Original) The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 48 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut

Pasteur, under the accession number I-1669.

32.(Original) The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus faecium* SF 3 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1671.

33.(Original) The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 1 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1664.

34.(Original) The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 3 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1665.

35.(Original) The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 7 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1666.

36.(Original) The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 77 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1667.